



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

LATIN IN THE COMMERCIAL HIGH SCHOOL

BY HARRY L. SENGER
Woodward High School, Cincinnati, Ohio

In most of the high schools of the country a student taking commercial work may combine with his commercial studies the regular college-preparatory course in Latin. This, as the speaker learned upon extensive inquiry, is due, not to a widespread conviction that Latin is a justifiable element in a commercial course, but to the fact that in most public schools the commercial work at the present time is in a semi-organized condition. In the larger, richer, and more progressive communities with highly specialized commercial courses, Latin is rigorously excluded on the plausible pretext that it is not in the remotest degree vocational.

To this charge we can only answer:

If it be so, it is a grievous fault,
And grievously hath Caesar answered it.

The vocational army marches on, penetrating ever deeper into the realm of culture, and daily adding new provinces to its ample conquests. Science, mathematics, history, the modern languages are being vocationalized. Those who create and those who observe educational endeavor declare in unison that this movement will continue until every subject now in the curriculum will either have been vocationalized or cast into limbo. To answer this statement with a sneer may serve to strengthen our courage, but will in no wise disprove the truth of the prophecy. Talk about the pendulum swinging back is mere conjecture. The fact is that a host of determined people are about to kick Latin out of the window, and will do so, unless we show the folly of it.

We must show the value of Latin to the so-called scientific educator, our jobber of middleman, as it were, through whose hands all our wares seem destined to pass, or to the average American citizen, the ultimate consumer upon whose favor our final success

depends. It is a waste of eloquence to prove the worth of Latin to classical teachers, because they admit it. We must convince others, and to do this we should not speak in terms of culture, of mental discipline, or artistic appreciation, for the people as a whole will never be highly cultivated, severely trained, or keenly critical.

Right here, it is well for me to pause, so as to give you the opportunity to determine whether you stand upon my ground or upon a different level. Do you believe that knowledge is only for the few? that education and democracy are antonyms? Do you believe that a student should be compelled to learn either much Latin or none whatever? If you hold any of these opinions, you need not concern yourselves with what remains of my paper. To you, all that follows is based upon error. Now I hold, and there are those who think with me, that Latin is a valuable instrument of general education. I believe it is of value to the stenographer as it is to the poet. I believe that a little Latin is a dangerous thing in proportion to its littleness, but still better than no Latin at all. I must believe this or find some task other than the teaching of Latin. The great work before the American teacher today is not to nurse a few scholars into strength and pre-eminence, but to uplift the mass of the people as a whole. Whoever turns aside from this work will concern himself with trifles.

Having defined our position, let us continue our examination of the reasons advanced for the teaching of Latin. These are not the same as they were ten or fifteen years ago before scientific educators began to shake their heads dubiously over the doctrine of formal discipline and before the vocational idea had set fire to the land. We now claim that Latin is practical for certain professions, viz., learning, literature, law, medicine, theology, teaching; but our claims, here, though worthy of consideration, are by no means generally admitted. Yet, although we claim more than the other side is willing to allow us, we are in reality taking a position of excessive shyness and humility. In a few years the average city high school will be one-third commercial, one-third industrial, and one-third academic. At its present vocational valuation Latin will find entrance only to the academic department on an equal footing with German, French, and Spanish. Under such conditions Latin

would enrol from one-twelfth to one-sixth of the pupils in the school. This means quite a drop of the thermometer from the days when Latin was the most important subject in the curriculum.

Yet I am confident that Latin will eventually occupy a prominent position in the reorganized high school, and that this will be due to its conceded vocational value. But it must have this value for others than the members of a few professions. Now what is there in a course in Latin which men may use in the workaday world? The answer, it seems to me, is direct and simple—*linguistic training*. This claim of Latin is by no means new or startling. I hope, however, to present the old thing from an unusual and more effective point of view.

The sons of Adam may be roughly divided into two classes according as they eat their bread. The first class is of those who make and do things with their hands—the original and inarticulate sons of toil. The second class is of those whose bread comes to them through thinking and talking and writing about the things which manual labor has produced or will produce. These are the men of the market place. Perhaps the most efficient implement of commerce, now as when commerce began, is language.

Nowhere, as in the commercial world, is the inaccurate use or apprehension of language followed by such disastrous results. Vast sums may depend upon the wording of a contract or the interpretation of an order. Nowhere are there more splendid rewards for the skilful and forceful use of language, written and spoken, than in advertising and selling. He who dictates and she who fingers the keys are either the victims or the masters of language.

That training in language is the most important element in commercial training none would dare to deny. That Latin is an effective means of linguistic training will be conceded by many who would deny most of its other claims to recognition.

All of us here, I suppose, are agreed that a study of Latin is an essential prerequisite for the mastery of English. That this is true, the etymological relation of the two languages is in itself sufficient to convince us. More important, however, though not obvious, is the practice gained, from reading Latin, from writing Latin, and

from learning the Latin grammar, in handling a number of somewhat difficult thought-processes together with the language symbols which represent them. The difficulty of Latin phraseology is out of all proportion to that encountered in a modern foreign language. Modern forms of thought and modern modes of expression are, like modern habits of life, wonderfully alike in different lands. Translating, so called, from German, say, or French, may not be translating at all, but merely transferring a German or French word or phrase into its ready-made and self-evident English equivalent. Such an exercise is often but a semiconscious substitution of words, not an active struggle to express an idea.

Latin, therefore, is to be preferred over a modern language, because it is difficult. It is well to emphasize this difficulty when discussing Latin with hostile persons of barbaric tongues. And when we are asked the tedious question, of what advantage this difficulty may be, let us say that it involves, not the training of the mind, for this term is out of favor and out of fashion, but training in language, which is almost the same thing. Training in language is vocational training for all except the mute, inglorious ones. Under this banner we should be able to hold our citadel without paying tribute to the invader.

Under this banner Latin has entered the commercial department of Woodward High School. Its entrance, I regret to say, was greeted with general opposition on the part of the modern-language teachers, who demanded that every pupil in the commercial department should have four years of either German or Spanish, so that upon graduating he might apply for a position as foreign correspondent. Our answer to this has been that American foreign commerce is almost negligible in comparison with the domestic, that our commerce with the Spanish-speaking peoples to the south of us is a dream of the future rather than a present reality, that under any conditions nearly all our trading will be carried on in the English language, and that this language should yield but little to foreign tongues in a course which professes to be practical and applicable to actual life. Such being the case, Latin, as the key to English, is more useful to the average business man than a commercial course in German or Spanish.

But convention is strong in the new departments of education—almost as strong as in the old. As every big high school of the country was turning out an army of German and Spanish correspondents sufficient to supply the demands of a considerable German or Spanish city, it would have been no light heresy to dispense entirely with the foreign correspondence. The Latin course was therefore established as a two-year course to be followed by two years of Spanish, for which it naturally offers some preparation.

The nature of the course may be indicated by the following characteristics:

Its vocabulary is of such Latin words as have produced a numerous English progeny.

It exemplifies in sentences the meaning of many English words, and gives drill in their use.

There is written translation, both ways.

It gives the essential facts of Latin grammar, because most of these are also the laws of English speech.

(In this connection we may note that the subjunctive mode is ignored throughout the course—both as to inflection and as to syntax.)

Rules for the derivation of Spanish words from Latin are given and illustrated by 180 examples.

Other practical applications of Latin included in the course are: Latin abbreviations now in use; Latin words and phrases now in use; Latin proverbs and mottoes; Latin legal terms found in popular reading-matter; explanation of the Roman numerical system.

At the completion of the course, the pupil will have read 12 stories from *Pearson's Reader*, 7 tales of early Rome from *Gallup's Reader*, from the Vulgate an adaptation of the story of the Prodigal Son, and one of the Twenty-third Psalm, 10 chapters of the *Gallie War*, some historical sketches from *Viri Romae*, and a few brief selections from Horace which are to be memorized.

Such is the course at Woodward High School in commercial Latin "so called," a course with many imperfections as I have presented it to you, and with possibly more as you might see it in actual practice. As to the results, I was disappointed in that the class, while under my instruction, had learned so little Latin. But

I may say the same of every Latin class I have ever had. I believe, however, that they have gained much in the mastery of English, that they hold the key to Spanish, and that they will eventually enter the commercial world with a better linguistic equipment than if their souls were innocent of Latin. The supervisor of the commercial work in Cincinnati, Mr. I. R. Garbutt, has expressed himself as being heartily in favor of the course.

I began to work up the course nearly three years ago—planned it, made friends for it as I could, and protected it with some success from the rage and ridicule of its enemies. At the beginning of last school year I began work with a class gathered with not a little difficulty. At the close of that year I became involved in another piece of work of such urgency that I abandoned all hope of continuing the course. At this point, one of our classical teachers, Miss Alice M. Donnelly, generously came to the rescue. She took up the burden where I laid it down, and gathered and arranged the material for the second year's work which she is now conducting more successfully than I could have hoped to do myself. I wish to close my paper with a word of thanks to her for thus undertaking a toilsome task with no hope of recompense—only the hope that she might aid in the cause to which we who are here are all devoted.